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NJMC's Environmental Interpretive Sign Program Earns State-wide Award

Agency Commended for Unique Presentation of Urban Wetlands

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission has received a 2007 Merit Award in the Communications Category from the New Jersey Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects for the educational and interpretive signage at Richard W. DeKorte Park.

“DeKorte Park symbolizes the best of the Meadowlands Commission’s environmental policymaking – putting a stop to the open dumping of the past and turning this area into a haven for environmental education and recreation,” said NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin, also the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. “But these achievements are only as good as our ability to share them with residents and visitors and the understanding they take home. Having signage that explains the hidden stories and lessons in our landscapes is critical to that and that’s why we’re so proud of this award.”

A total of 28 interpretive signs help visitors understand the natural environment throughout the 128-acre park facility, which includes 3½ miles of trails, the NJMC administrative building and the NJMC’s Meadowlands Environment Center. The Environmental Interpretive Sign Program commenced in the Fall of 2005 and is continuing throughout the park.

A series of “Project Signs” show the park’s transformation from a former landfill to a place for environmental education and passive recreation. There are also overall site maps and signs that detail various locations in the park as well as landmarks for self-guided tours.

In addition, information about the various plant and animal species is located at key viewing areas. “Meadowlands Stories Signs” focus on the thriving marsh estuary with words as well as artist’s watercolor renderings of raccoons, meadow voles and other night stalkers on the hunt for food. “Waterfowl Identification Signs” offer photographs, facts and trivia on ducks and some of the other 260 avian species found in the Meadowlands throughout the seasons.

“Based on my long experience in landscape architecture in the state, and my experience as chair of the Awards Program, I can say that the Meadowlands Commission’s award-

winning project – the interpretive signage at DeKorte Park – was one of the very best that I have seen in the Communications Category,” said Roy H. DeBoer, Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University and Chair of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Society of Landscapes Architects. “The signage was placed very strategically within the context of the design of the areas along the trail, calling attention to special features and explaining the nature of what the users were seeing and experiencing. The coordination between ‘educating’ the public while they are within the context of a beautifully designed environment along the trail is outstanding.”

The DeKorte Park site was chosen as the home of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission in the mid-1970s as both a symbolic statement and a literal barrier against the continued destruction of marshland by landfilling. It was named after Richard W. DeKorte, who was instrumental in passing the legislation that created the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission. Today, the site is visited by more than 36,000 people each year, including school groups, eco-tourists, joggers, photographers, and residents each year. The year 2007 will mark the 25th anniversary of the NJMC’s Meadowlands Environment Center and the NJMC’s office at DeKorte Park.

The NJASLA Award is the 27th the agency has earned for park development since 1987. For directions to DeKorte Park or more information, visit the NJMC Web site at www.njmeadowlands.gov.

Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects is the national professional association representing landscape architects. The ASLA has grown to more than 16,200 members with chapters representing all 50 states, United States territories, and 42 countries around the world. ASLA promotes the landscape architecture profession and advances the practice through advocacy, education, communication and fellowship. More information on the NJASLA can be found at www.njasla.org.

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